

Signs letter urging the Administration to increase money for VA by \$1.3 billion and submit an amended FY 2006 budget to increase future VA resources

Washington, DC - In response to last Thursday's news that rising health care costs have created a \$1 billion budget shortfall at the Department of Veterans Affairs, 12th

District Congressman John Barrow (D-GA) today joined with over 150 members of the House of Representatives in urging President Bush to quickly begin working with Congress to help fill the Department's current and future funding gaps.

"Earlier this year we did the right thing by approving an additional \$76 billion to help support our troops fighting overseas," Barrow said. "Now it's time to do the right thing again by making sure we fully fund the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

We should never shortchange the health care our troops and our vets deserve - the care they were promised."

"Right now, the Department of Veterans' Affairs is pinching pennies and shifting funds to pay for increasing health care costs - and that's taking money away from other priorities," Barrow continued. "In a time of war, these are not tradeoffs we should be making. I urge the President and his Administration to work with Congress to make sure our troops and our vets have all the support they need."

The letter Barrow signed requests that the Administration submit a supplemental FY 2005 funding request for \$1.3 billion to help cover the VA's current budget shortfall, as well as putting forth an amended FY 2006 VA budget that would eliminate future shortfalls. The letter reads as follows:

June 28, 2005

President George W. Bush

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to request that you submit a FY 2005 supplemental funding request adding at least \$1.3 billion to address the shortfall in veterans' health care funding that your Administration has identified. This additional funding is urgently needed today to care for troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the heroes from former conflicts who rely upon the VA for their health care. In addition, we request that you submit an amended FY 2006 budget to account for the veterans' health care shortfall that is now evident in your Administration's 2006 budget request.

In our estimation, your FY 2005 VA budget request was short \$2.5 billion. While Congress added \$1.2 billion, your budget remained \$1.3 billion short.

It appears the VA now agrees with our original estimate.

The 2006 budget request was similarly short. What is even more troubling is that funding for veterans' health care beyond 2007 is cut significantly below the amount needed merely to account for inflation. In the future, we urge you to submit veterans' budgets that more accurately reflect the resource requirements of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the health care needs of current veterans and the many thousands returning from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

At a time of war, funding for veterans must be made a clear and unmistakable priority.

We await the submission of your FY 2005 supplemental funding request and amended FY 2006 budget.

###

Contact: Harper Lawson, (202) 225-2823

click [here](#) for a .pdf copy of this release